

## 21.03 ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES

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This Clause provides local content to support Clauses 12 (Environmental and Landscape Values) and 13 (Environmental Risks) of the State Planning Policy Framework.

Specific references to individual towns are also included in Clause 21.10 (Local Areas).

### 21.03-1 Environment

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The natural environment of the Shire consists of outstanding features such as the Grampians, the Glenelg and Wannon Rivers, ancient geological forms, mountain peaks, and fertile farming land interspersed with magnificent red gums and diverse grasslands. The protection and management of these features is important for scientific, cultural, community and tourist-recreational purposes.

The natural resource base of the Shire is significant as the foundation to agriculture. As a result of the drier climate and economic drivers, there have been changes to the farming land uses that need to be monitored for their effect on the environment.

The natural environment is also significant for the attraction it provides to tourists. Natural features such as the Grampians bring domestic and international visitors to the Shire.

Given the large amount of native vegetation that has been lost in the Shire, protection of the areas of remnant vegetation is a high priority for its contribution to biodiversity and habitat provision. The Glenelg catchment has approximately 28% of its original native vegetation cover and the Hopkins catchment has only 3%.

On a State-wide scale the extent of woodlands is limited, fragmented and extremely depleted. Perennial native grassland communities are extremely limited. The Red Gum swamp community and Basalt Plains grassland community are listed as threatened ecological communities under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. The Plains Grasslands and Volcanic Eucalypt Grassy Woodlands are protected by the *Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

In contrast, forests and heathlands are reasonably well preserved. The Grampians supports a diverse range of native vegetation, dominated by dry eucalypt forests and woodlands. Many remaining stands of native vegetation exist on roadsides. The dramatic loss of vegetation cover in the area is reflected in the significant number of very rare or threatened species. The roadsides provide effective habitat links that support biodiversity retention and need to be managed in the context of a drier climate and the threats of weeds and fire.

The Eastern Barred Bandicoot is one of Victoria's most endangered animals and is listed as a threatened species under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. Formerly widespread across the basalt plains of western Victoria, it has suffered a greater than 99% reduction in range and abundance.

Other threatened species within the Shire listed under the Act include the Brolga, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo and Southern Bentwing Bat. The Striped Legless Lizard is one of a number of species listed as threatened.

#### Key Issues

- Protecting key environmental assets.
- Preventing impacts on the natural resource base from soil decline, dry land salinity, water quality decline, erosion, land management practices, pest plants and animals, and loss of native vegetation.
- Protecting Eastern Barred Bandicoot and its habitat.
- Addressing the urban/rural pressures on the natural environment.

- Ensuring a water balance at catchment level.
- Adapting to the requirements of a changing climate.

### **Objective 1**

To protect and sustainably manage natural resources.

### **Strategies**

- Ensure that land use and development take into account land capability.
- Support diversification of rural land uses that are consistent with sustainable land and water resource management.
- Ensure that land use and development do not compromise or lessen significant roadside conservation areas, stands of native vegetation, remnant grass areas or scar trees.
- Ensure that land use and development do not negatively impact on the habitat on the Eastern Barred Bandicoot and other threatened species.
- Prevent the increase of areas subject to salinity.
- Require that new land use and development do not increase net run-off, soil degradation, or effluent release to rivers and streams.
- Protect the environmental features and values associated with the Wannon and Glenelg Rivers and the Grange Burn.

### **Implementation**

The strategies in relation to environment will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

### **Policy guidelines**

When deciding on an application for use and development that may impact on the environment, the responsible authority will consider as appropriate:

- Recommendations of the Grampians Surrounds Strategy (1991)
- Recommendations of the Sustainability Strategy 2010-2020 (2010)
- Native Vegetation Management Plans associated with (reserved) Crown land
- Any regional catchment strategies approved under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* and any associated implementation plan or strategy including any regional river health and wetland strategies.

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### **Landscape**

The Shire is characterised by three fundamental natural landscapes – the Victorian Volcanic Plains, the Dundas Tablelands and the Grampians.

The Victorian Volcanic Plains stretch from Melbourne to Mount Gambier in South Australia, and include a range of geologically unique volcanic features. The Plains traverse the southern portion of the Shire. Important sites include Mount Napier, Mount Rouse, Harman's Valley and the Byaduk Caves and Tumuli.

The Dundas tablelands lie south and west of the Grampians and north of the Victorian Volcanic Plains, and are characterised by undulating hills, rolling red gum plains and woodlands, and a web of waterways, lakes and wetlands. Key features include the Wannon

River, Glenelg River, the Wannon and Nigretta Falls, Coleraine Hills, Mount Baimbridge, Lake Linlithgow and Rocklands Reservoir.

The land forming the southern edge of Coleraine is a prominent landscape feature and the use and development of land has the potential to visually impact on the amenity of the town.

The Wannon River and Wannon and Nigretta Falls are among the Shire's outstanding landscape features and a major tourist attraction. The setting of the river, falls and adjoining public reserve are a major tourist, recreational, economic and environmental assets for the Shire and local and regional community.

The Grampians are a dramatic series of mountain ranges, beginning in the northeast of the Shire and extending 80 kilometres north of Dunkeld, and as wide as 50 kilometres from east to west. The most dominating visual aspect of the Grampians is the topography with sheer cliffs rising sharply over 1000 metres above the relatively flat surrounding land. This impressive landform can be sighted from a distance of over 60 kilometres.

The national significance of the Grampians is reflected in its 1984 designation as a National Park. The environmental importance of the Grampians is demonstrated by the existence of one third of all Victorian species of plants. Of these, 18 are found only in the Grampians and five are rare or endangered. There are 60 Aboriginal rock art sites and 26 historic sites related to European settlement. Key features of the Grampians within the Shire include Mount Abrupt and Mount Sturgeon, Victoria Valley, the Victoria Range and the Black Range.

The Grampians pose opportunities to the Shire as a tourist attraction, as well as contributing to the outstanding landscape and environmental values of the Shire. Land use and development around this feature need to take into consideration any impact on the visual and environmental integrity of this feature.

The cultural landscape of farming adds to the sense of place and attractiveness. In addition, the townships of the Shire are also part of the significant landscape and environment, and urban development must be managed so as not to compromise these values.

### **Key issues**

- Protecting the landscape character of rural areas, including those associated with red gum plains, volcanic peaks and the Grampians.
- Managing development of towns to minimise impacts on landscape character.

### **Objective 1**

To protect landscape elements that contribute to lifestyle, tourism and amenity.

### **Strategies**

- Ensure that the design, siting, scale and appearance of development do not have an adverse impact upon the landscape, environmental setting or presentation of the area.
- Encourage the use of existing and/or new vegetation to screen development in appropriate locations, in particular the use of locally indigenous vegetation which does not include environmental weed species (native or otherwise).
- Preserve and enhance the environmental, landscape, recreational, heritage and tourism values of the Wannon area, and particularly the environs of the falls.
- Discourage development on ridge lines and peaks in significant landscapes.
- Protect the character, setting, appearance and vistas of landscape and natural elements associated with volcanic peaks and features.

- Ensure that the use and development of land are sensitive to the surrounding landscape and do not lessen the existing appearance and visual amenity of the area.
- Minimise the impact of development on existing vegetation, habitat and physical features such as rock outcrops, views from prominent locations and the general setting of the Wannon River and the falls.
- Discourage use and development that will damage, degrade or limit conservation and protection of the volcanic peaks and features.
- Encourage tourist or recreation use or development that enhances the appeal, presentation and natural attributes of the volcanic peaks.

### **Implementation**

The strategies in relation to landscape will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

### **Policy guidelines**

When deciding on an application for use and development that may impact on the landscape, the responsible authority will consider as appropriate:

- Recommendations of the Grampians Surrounds Strategy (1991) with regard to land use changes and development.

The impacts on important built and natural features of the landscape.

## **21.03- 3 Floodplains**

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### **Key Issues**

Protection of floodplains from inappropriate development.

Protection of life and property from flood events.

Precautionary principle approach to development within areas which are known to flood.

### **Objective 1**

To assist in the protection of:

- Life, property and community infrastructure from flood hazard.
- The natural flood carrying capacity of rivers, streams and floodways.
- The flood storage functions of floodplains and waterways.
- Floodplain areas of environmental significance or of importance of river health.

### **Strategies**

Identify land affected by flooding, including floodway areas, as verified by the relevant floodplain management authority, in planning scheme maps. Land affected by flooding is land inundated by the 1 in 100 year flood event or as determined by the floodplain management authority.

Avoid intensifying the impacts of flooding through inappropriately located uses and developments.

Locate emergency and community facilities (including hospitals, ambulance stations, police stations, fire stations, residential aged care facilities, communication facilities, transport facilities, community shelters and schools) outside the 1 in 100 year floodplain and, where possible, at levels above the height of the probable maximum flood.

Locate developments and uses which involve the storage or disposal of environmentally hazardous industrial and agricultural chemicals or wastes and other dangerous goods (including intensive animal industries and sewerage treatment plants) must not be located on floodplains unless site design and management is such that potential contact between such substances and floodwaters is prevented, without affecting the flood carrying and flood storage functions of the floodplain.

### **Implementation**

The strategies in relation to floodplains will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

### **Policy guidelines**

When deciding on an application for use and development that may impact on floodplains, the responsible authority will consider as appropriate:

- Any floodplain management strategy, manual, policy and practice, adopted by the responsible floodplain management authority, including but not limited to:
  - Any regional catchment strategies approved under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 and any associated implementation plan or strategy including any regional river health and wetland strategies.
  - Victorian Strategy for Healthy Rivers, Estuaries and Wetlands adopted by the Catchment Management Authority
  - Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy
  - Local Floodplain Development Plans adopted by the Council or the responsible floodplain management authority.

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### **Bushfire**

The majority of the Shire is designated as a Bushfire Prone Area with approximately a quarter of the Shire affected by the Bushfire Management Overlay. The most significant urban interfaces to bushfire hazards are in the towns of Balmoral and Dunkeld. Various parts of the Shire have suffered from bushfire damage on numerous occasions, with the most significant fires occurring in 1944, 1955, 1977, 1983, and 2009. The Shire is particularly prone to fire within the Grampians bioregion where there is significant vegetation cover and steep sloping land. It is important that development include fire protection measures that relate to the level of fire risk in these areas.

It is important that fire management issues are considered in the assessment of land use and development proposals, which by their design, location or operation place the community at risk from uncontrolled fire.

### **Key Issues**

Protection of areas prone to bushfire risk from inappropriate development.

Managing the urban bushfire threat interface of towns in areas prone to bushfire risk.

Protection of life and property from bushfire events.

## **Objective 1**

To assist efforts to:

- Mitigate the risk to life, property and the environment in areas prone to bushfire risk.
- Ensure that land use and development does not increase the level of fire risk.
- Ensure that land use and development includes adequate fire protection measures.

## **Strategies**

Identify land affected by bushfire and areas at risk to bushfire attack through the development of more detailed mapping and provisions in relation to fire risk areas and fire prevention, in conjunction with the CFA.

Apply the precautionary principle approach to development within areas prone to bushfire risk.

Manage threat to life and property on the urban interface through a combination of separation distances, building construction, water supply and fire service access.

## **Implementation**

The strategies in relation to bushfire will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

## **Policy guidelines**

Planning must consider as relevant:

- The extent to which the application meets the objectives and strategies of this policy.
- The Grampians Regional Bushfire Planning Assessment (2012).
- The Municipal Fire Prevention Plan.
- Any relevant guidance published by the relevant fire authority.
- Whether a Section 173 Agreement under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* is necessary and appropriate to meet any of the above requirements.